

Government Focus Group 9:30 7/1/04

Attendance: Susan Puntillo, notes; Mark McDermid, facilitator; Chuck Larscheid, Bill Casey, Mike Englebart, Rick Stadelman, Rick Schneider

Introduction: Information gathering, need their perspective, doing this because of budget issues, desire to take advantage of new technologies, and

Group Expectations or What they wanted to see coming out of today's session:

- Like to see summary of all the group comments
- Number of issues affecting them – funding is one and how to pursue funding
- Staffing – regarding inspections and day-to-day work not enough
- County borders is a problem for funding
- Staffing – too many cutbacks
- Why are we doing this at this time? – We are just finally getting on track after the reorg – don't shake up the applecart again
- What is possible?
- Send out a timeline
- Don't expect a lot to be accomplished – funding is restrictive so no positive result – want to see positive change, but not expecting to see much
- Gain insight into redesign process
- Lack of DNR staff to support program and diminishing expertise. Generally very helpful and knowledgeable helping with recycling incentive grant process
- Learn about the redesign
- Don't lose what has been positive – recycling is one area where we don't get a lot of calls from local officials

Question 1: What types of activities have you had experience with the waste program – land fills, solid waste facility approvals, composting, recycling, etc?

- Positive experiences, helpful, did good work, hope with all the cuts we can continue. Staff overworked and morale issues (municipal SW compost facility)
- Lost some of the contact people
- They end up teaching staff as much as staff ends up helping them – due to reassignments from one area of expertise to another – not a big deal, but an issue
- Like the idea of one assigned contact person – but maybe expecting too much from one person – urban and rural waste management issues are different
- Diminished staff, can't get out to do inspections like they used to – now come under fire
- Fear of change and willingness to invest time and effort – again relates to diminishing and shifting staff
- Liked the effect of the last reorg that pushed things out to the region. Easier to work in region than go back to Madison. Regional staff understand the projects better, been to the site. For permits and approvals they don't need to be convinced, they know what is there. They are willing to be more flexible – have built trust and working relationship. People are easier to access and work with.
- Some acceptance for the situation that is a consequence of cuts
- Don't just nibble at the edges with cutting until you can't really do much. Look at everything and some programs just have to be cut to let the others survive.

Question 2: What of your experience was positive and where we could have done better?

- State report on status of recycling programs. Not meeting the pounds/person – Local agent handled it beautifully. Gave valid reasons for this. Support not undermine

programs – maybe goal needs to be modified because waste stream is different. Helped educate everyone.

- Professional and committed staff throughout the department – especially on local level
- We seem to have lost momentum. We have education and education materials, but need to refocus and get back to local officials and groups – key policy makers need to get reengaged
- Have web site, but need to be aware of it to get info. Need to raise awareness
- Like outreach during Brewer Games
- Reinforce that it is a state mandated program
- Bigger strategic issues (PCBsoils, sediment management and landfill siting) try to make it more obvious where you start from, where you are going and how you get there. Need to stay focused. Big things get unfocused.
- DNR has not gone out and educated public about what their actual responsibility is - ex: siting landfill. What are our bounds and what are we required to make our decisions on
- Should DNR have an educational role when on the regulatory side? Need to respond when questions come up like 'Why is DNR siting this landfill?'
- Communicate what our authority and responsibility is
- Open burning and back yard dumping – too soon to tell how this is going to turn out, but it has started out well. The process we are using here is a good one.
- Staff don't pass judgement – just help you through the problem
- Simplification of regulations is very helpful. Ex: transfer station approvals
- Like electronic filing

Question 3: Where do you see areas that changes could be made – consider items such as staffing, code/statutory, process, etc?

- Recycling grant – send to clerk rather than manager that has to fill out the forms. Send to manager. Can still notify clerk, but send to form manager – email should make this possible.
- Market development for recycled products seems to have gotten lost.
- Clean up the distribution lists – Bill Casey, William Casey, etc
- In submitting projects for approvals – could we streamline staff review – in particular landfill plans produced by a licensed engineer then DNR staff engineers redo – takes time and costs money. Maybe just key elements that they double check
- Switch over of DNR stuff all under DATCP – look for programs that are splintered and get them put together – this is a good thing.

Question 4: What issues do you see affecting the waste industry and/or municipalities in the future that we should be anticipating?

- Waste coming into WI because it is cheaper to dump here – even tipping fees. Other states have surcharges on fees. Can't just keep waste out, but can use the money for targeted programs
- Consolidation to bigger and fewer SW disposal facilities and haulers - just some mega multi-state haulers
- Very few municipalities involved in landfills in the future
- More lobbying money getting haulers point of view across
- Single stream recycling – not much done in the state so work will go out of state – we will lose oversight, inspection ability, etc
- Materials recycling facilities, curb side, etc – all could go away – more and more privatization – DNR needs to be able to react and deal with it.
- In state facilities will have one standard and out of state could have another – then we will have a competitive disadvantage

- How much of the bureau PR/GPR? - Want to support tipping fees to help fund the program
- Some issue – when have designated stream issues when diverted to another issue.

Question 5: In your experience, are there innovative approaches that you've seen utilized that could be expanded on and utilized more extensively throughout the state?

- DNR used to have regional informal get togethers – public and private sector. Casual, interesting, informative and helpful. Did not cost much – everyone bought their own lunch etc. Now DNR does not have time, no travel budget, etc.
- Face to face communication is good
- Education for policy makers – DNR make presentations to Town Boards
- Sector based approaches to issues - Special events recycling
- Meetings on funding issues – lay out where money comes from and how the money is spent.
- Feeling that money goes out of program and does not go to support what it was collected for – need clarity on fees, revenue, work – who is supporting whom

Question 6: If you could change 3 things about our solid and our hazardous waste programs what would they be?

- Increase program revenue for the waste management pgm. (tipping fee)
- State leadership - Add additional educational and outreach for SW - to public in general, to elected officials, the informal gatherings
- Specialized waste – tires solved problem once, then funding went away and now problem is back (\$40/ton to \$125/ton)
- Adequately staff and fund programs
- Program integrity within a single department
- Maintain stability within dept. staff

- Done some good things, keep the good things
- Explore or expand manufacturer responsibility to get funding – lessen taxpayer liability get cost of waste management back to the manufacturer of the product
- Don't dismiss out of hand suggestions from groups when you ask groups for their opinions or input. Group felt they were steered to a predetermined outcome – just tell people up-front if there are limitations.
- Itemize, clarify and justify revenues and expenses
- Separate policies that can be done at local level, regional level and then macro-state level
- Maintain appropriate support staff levels
- Streamline approval process – don't redo work of others – prioritize within review what to go over and what to accept

Gaps

- Within the dept. need to decide on priorities where GPR is going to be spent. Don't keep doing across the board cuts. Set priorities and fund those
- Future funding of recycling programs???
- Attempts made to be sure funding comes from appropriate or related resources
- Manufacturers need to have an organization that deals with handling the cost of waste stream
- PCB – Fox River cleanup – disconnect between various divisions and seem to talk different languages